



Beekeepers Patrick Jiang (LAW'11) (left) and Liz Peyton (CAS'11) gingerly handle their first shipment.

Beekeepers on the Charles

A new student club buzzes into action

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THOUSANDS OF BEES swirled through the air as members of the newly founded BU Beekeepers Club installed their first hive on the banks of the Charles River last spring. The bees lighted on lapels, tiptoed across the backs of hands, and danced on foreheads. The installers never flinched, and more important, never got stung.

“It’s really good to have no negative energy when doing this,” says Nancy Mangion, owner of Beekeepers’ Warehouse, which supplied the club’s equipment and the bees (a \$300 package). “If you have a gentle aura and attitude, they’re unlikely to sting you.”

It all started when club president Chris Hall (ENG’13) mentioned the possibility of starting a beekeeping club at an Organic Gardening Club meeting last fall, and 10 students liked the idea enough to sign on.

Over the winter, the beekeeper wannabes made a field trip to Mangion’s Woburn, Mass., store to learn what equipment would be needed and

WEB EXTRA
Watch a video about the BU Beekeepers Club at bu.edu/bostonia.



how to handle a few thousand bees. Meanwhile, club members heard that BU had an expert beekeeper, Bill Murray, a manager in Facilities Management and Planning. Murray was glad to share his expertise.

On a sunny afternoon, Murray, Mangion, and two student beekeepers—Liz Peyton (CAS’11) and Patrick Jiang (LAW’11)—trotted through a patch of wild daisies along the Charles, while Murray orchestrated the hive’s assembly. They removed each frame and sprayed it with sugar water, a treat to tide over the bees while they establish their honeycomb and to entice the already pregnant queen to start laying eggs. A healthy queen will lay at least 3,000 eggs a week.

Once the hive was prepped, Mangion unveiled her special delivery from Georgia—a screened box marked with a green dot, containing the queen bee, along with 10,000 honeybees. Mangion deftly removed a wood shingle to reveal the queen enclosed in a separate rectangular cage, unplugged a cork from the cage,

and shimmied the queen into a frame already packed with honeycomb. Over the coming days, the queen’s helper bees would eat their way through a sugar candy cage door and set her free to lay eggs for the hive’s next generation.

The workers carefully covered the hive and inverted a jar of sugar water over the hive’s opening to provide a food source for the weeks ahead. From here on, students monitor the hive to make sure the queen is laying and the food supply is adequate.

“Beekeeping is a hobby of scientific neglect,” Mangion says. “You want to know when they’re in trouble and how to intervene.”

Murray and Mangion advised the students against harvesting honey too soon, because the bees’ needs must come before the keepers’ desire to benefit from their (and the bees’) work.

“People don’t always know how important bees are,” says Hall, who was out of town when the hive was installed. He says bees pollinate a third of what people eat. “Without any bees, that’s a lot of food gone.” **LESLIE FRIDAY**